

## The typology of nominal licensing in Austronesian voice languages

**Background:** A distinctive and well-studied feature of many Austronesian languages is their **voice system**. In such languages, (a) there is one argument in each clause (the “**subject**”) in a particular morphological form and/or position, and (b) the choice of this argument affects case-marking and/or word order of other arguments. Here we adopt the view, following especially Richards 2000, Pearson 2005, Erlewine, Levin, and Van Urk 2017, that a left-peripheral head must probe for a DP (the subject) and structurally case-license it, and which can also trigger the fronting of the subject DP. (We might call this a “joint” head **CT**, as in Legate 2011, Aldridge 2017, Erlewine 2018.)

**This talk:** With the subject DP uniformly receiving structural licensing by CT, here we investigate **mechanisms of nominal licensing for non-subject DPs**, proposing **two parameters** which explain case and word order facts across a wide range of Austronesian languages:

- (1) **Accusative parameter:**  $v$  {can/cannot} assign accusative case.
- (2) **Last-resort licensing parameter:** If a DP lacks a source for structural Case-licensing, it can be licensed (a) *by insertion of a case-marker* (genitive) (Stowell, 1981; Halpert, 2012; Imanishi, 2014; Van Urk, 2015) or (b) *under linear adjacency* with the verb (Baker, 1988, 2014; Levin, 2015).

**Data:** We discuss four languages — Atayal, Tagalog, Balinese, and Toba Batak — as exemplars for the four types of languages predicted by these parameters.

	+ACC	−ACC
Case-insertion:	Atayal	Tagalog
Adjacency:	Balinese	Toba Batak

Clauses below are *agent voice* (AV) or *patient voice* (PV), corresponding to the choice of subject.

Atayal [+ACC, case-insertion]: Subjects are nominative (*ku*). Non-subject patients are accusative (*cu*). **Non-subject agents are genitive (*nku*)**.

- (3) ‘The old man wrapped the/a fish.’
  - a. C<um>abu’ cu’ qulih ku’ nabakis.  
wrap<AV> ACC fish NOM old.man
  - b. Cabu’-un **nku**’ nabakis ku’ qulih.  
wrap-PV GEN old.man NOM fish  
(Huang, 1995)

Tagalog [−ACC, case-ins.]: Subjects are nominative (*ang*). **Both non-subject agents and patients are genitive (*ng*)**.

- (4) ‘The/a child wrote the/a letter.’
  - a. S<um>ulat ang bata **ng** liham.  
write<AV> NOM child GEN letter
  - b. S<in>ulat **ng** bata ang liham.  
write<PV> GEN child NOM letter  
(Schachter, 1996)

Balinese [+ACC, adjacency]: Postverbal word order is free, with one exception. **Non-subject agents must be immediately postverbal**.

- (5) Be-e daar (\*keras-keras) ida.  
fish-the PV.eat quickly 3sg  
‘S/he ate the fish (quickly).’

Levin (2015) shows that this is not PNI (Mas-sam, 2001), but instead reflects Case-licensing by adjacency (cf. Baker, 2014).

Toba Batak [−ACC, adjacency]: Postverbal word order is free, with one exception. **Both non-subject agents and patients must be immediately postverbal** (Schachter, 1984).

- (6) ‘Poltak ate (the) pork (yesterday).’
  - a. Si P. mang-allang (\*nantoari) babi.  
P. AV-eat yesterday pork
  - b. Babi-on di-allang (\*nantoari) si P.  
pork-the PV-eat yesterday P.

- This parallel between the distribution of genitive in Atayal/Tagalog-type languages and verb-adjacency in Balinese/Toba Batak-type languages has never before been discussed.

**Discussion:** In previous work, the Atayal-type has often been described as ergative (with GEN = ergative and ACC being an antipassive oblique). This does not obviously extend to the Tagalog-type, unless accidental ERG = OBL homophony is proposed (see e.g. Aldridge, 2004). These analyses make even less sense extended to western Austronesian languages like Balinese and Toba Batak, where core arguments show word order restrictions rather than case-markers.

In contrast, our two parameters (1–2) predict these four language types, with superficially distinct behavior. The shared core of Austronesian voice systems is that the subject is structurally Case-licensed by virtue of being the subject (Erlewine, Levin, and Van Urk, 2017). These languages then vary in the strategies available for licensing other DPs.

**Predictions:** Voice system languages are famous for having additional, “oblique” voices beyond just SV and OV. In such a situation, in a –ACC language, both subject and object will lack structural Case licensing. Last resort case insertion can rescue multiple DPs. As predicted, in Tagalog, we see *ng* on *both* DPs in such cases (7).

- (7) *Tagalog benefactive pivot (from Schachter 1996):*  
I-s<in>ulat      **ng** bata **ng** liham ang babae.  
DAT-WROTE<OV> GEN child GEN letter NOM woman  
'A/The child wrote a letter for the woman.'

In contrast, licensing by adjacency can only rescue one DP. Three-DP ditransitives (not dative/oblique ditransitives) in –ACC will necessarily have two DPs which require structural case licensing. As then predicted, Toba Batak lacks such ditransitives (Erlewine, 2018).

**Selected references:** Aldridge 2004: Ergativity and word order in Austronesian languages, Cornell PhD • Aldridge 2017:  $\Phi$ -feature competition: A unified approach to the Austronesian extraction restriction, *CLS* 52 • Baker 2014: Pseudo noun incorporation as covert noun incorporation, *Language & Linguistics* 15 • Erlewine 2018: Extraction and licensing in Toba Batak, *Language* 94 • Erlewine, Levin, Van Urk 2017: Ergativity and Austronesian-type voice systems, in *Oxford Handbook of Ergativity* • Huang 1995: The syntactic structure of Wulai and Mayrinax Atayal: a comparison • Levin 2015: *Licensing without case*, MIT PhD • Richards 2000: Another look at Tagalog subjects, in *Formal Issues in Austronesian Linguistics* • Schachter 1984: Semantic-role-based syntax in Toba Batak, in *Studies in the structure of Toba Batak*. • Schachter 1996: The subject in Tagalog: still none of the above • Van Urk 2015: *A uniform syntax for phrasal movement: A Dinka Bor case study*, MIT PhD